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Alon Shamriz

Samer Al-Talalka

Yotam Haim

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ISRAELI FORCES MISTAKENLY KILL THREE HOSTAGES DURING GAZA OPS

The three were shot after the troops mistook them for threats during an operation in Gaza City, Israeli Army spokesperson Daniel Hagari said

FORCES IGNORED WHITE FLAGS, HEBREW PLEAS

They were shot even as they carried a white flag and cried for help in Hebrew, an initial probe has found. Upon seeing them, one of the soldiers shouted "terrorists", and the troops opened fire, hitting two of them. The third one ran into a building to take cover, but was found and killed. The three were Yotam Haim, Alon Shamriz, and Samer El-Talalqa | P12

HUNDREDS TAKE PART IN TEL AVIV PROTEST

- An Israeli official said the troops were under pressure after days of heavy fighting in the area. Hamas fighters have used deceptive tactics to lure Israelis into traps, a possible reason for ignoring Hebrew pleas
- It comes as Israel is facing growing calls to end the fighting. Hundreds gathered at Israel's ministry of defence in the city of Tel Aviv to protest

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PEOPLE ARE STILL HELD HOSTAGE BY HAMAS IN GAZA STRIP

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

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Cops to question Simha tomorrow over House pass

Sixth accused remanded in police custody; he helped Jha destroy mobiles of all others

UJWAL JALALI @ New Delhi

MYSURU BJP MP Pratap Simha, who cleared the passes for the accused in the Parliament security breach case, is likely to be questioned by Delhi Police on Monday. According to sources, Simha is currently not in the national capital.

Simha will be asked on what basis he issued visitor passes to Manoranjan D and Sagar Sharma, according to sources. Whenever a visitor pass is issued, a parliamentarian gives an undertaking saying the visitor is known to him.

The two accused who entered the Lok Sabha on Wednesday used passes recommended by Simha. Manoranjan belongs to his constituency and is said to be a frequent visitor to his office. Reports said Manoranjan made several requests to Simha and his office for the pass in last three months. Simha's office sought to defend him, claiming MPs generally entertain such requests from people of their constituency.

Pratap Simha

Delhi Police in Lucknow

Delhi Police teams are in Lucknow and Latur to find out the cavity-designed shoe and coloured smoke canisters the accused used in Parliament

Despite flak from the Opposition both inside and outside Parliament demanding Simha's resignation, the BJP MP has so far not responded. He, however, met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla after the massive security breach. On Saturday, Birla wrote to all MPs saying that he had formed a 'high-powered committee' to review Parliament security and formulate an action plan to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

Meanwhile, the sixth accused in the security breach case, Mahesh Kumawat, was formally arrested on Saturday. Later, he was produced before a court, which sent him to seven-day police custody. Mahesh was present outside Parliament on the day of the incident along with mastermind Lalit Jha and another accused named Kailash. After the incident, Mahesh and Jha fled to Rajasthan and stayed in a hotel booked in Mahesh's name. Sources said that Mahesh helped Jha in the destruction of mobile phones in Rajasthan. Mahesh has been booked on charges of criminal conspiracy and destruction of evidence.

Meanwhile, the special cell has directed the family members of Manoranjan not to leave the city without prior permission. P5

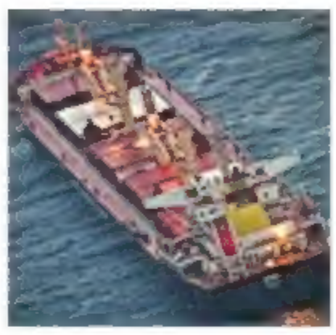
Navy intercepts ship hijacked by pirates

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

THE Indian Navy became the first responder to a maritime crisis as it quickly reacted to an SOS message from a hijacked ship in the Arabian Sea and intercepted the vessel.

The Navy deployed its naval maritime patrol aircraft to track the movement of the hijacked vessel that was moving towards the coast of Somalia, according to a statement.

After the aircraft located the vessel, the Indian Navy diverted its warship from Gulf of Aden. The hijacked vessel was intercepted Saturday morning.



the Navy added.

The Malta-flagged cargo vessel called MV Ruen with 18 crew on board gave a distress signal on December 14, indicating that six pirates had boarded the vessel.

The overall situation is being closely monitored in coordination with other agencies in the area, the Navy said. The navies of Spain and Japan, too, have responded to the situation.

Until 2017, ships travelling near Africa were attacked by Somalian pirates. Counter-piracy efforts were then put in place by various countries to deal with the menace.

The Indian Navy said it is committed to ensuring safety of merchant shipping along with international partners and friendly foreign countries.

EXPRESS READ

KMF to offer buffalo milk from this month

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) will start selling buffalo milk from December 21-22 across the state. KMF Managing Director MK Jagadish said around two years back, the federation was selling around 4,000- 5,000 litres of buffalo milk, but stopped due to shortage of supply. P2

Govt not interested in continuing paid parking

Bengaluru: After receiving mixed responses from the public to paid parking system in the city, the state government has decided not to continue it further. Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike officials stated that the paid parking system came to a halt on Cunningham Road due to traffic problems. P2

Mock drills to check Covid preparedness

Bengaluru: With Covid cases rising in neighbouring Kerala, mock drills will be conducted at government hospitals across Karnataka to check the state's preparedness to handle any sudden surge in cases. P3

On day of I.N.D.I.A talks, Kejri to leave for Vipassana

ASHISH SRIVASTAVA @ New Delhi

ON the day the Opposition I.N.D.I.A bloc will hold seat-sharing talks at its fourth coordination committee meeting here, Aam Aadmi Party's national convenor Arvind Kejriwal will leave for a Vipassana meditation session at an undisclosed location for 10 days.

The Chief Minister's Office informed that Kejriwal will be unavailable from December 19 to 30 as he is due to participate in his annual Vipassana retreat. Vipassana sessions mandate that the participant stays out of contact with the outer world and observes complete silence.

Kejriwal's itinerary became known a day after the Congress announced the date of the I.N.D.I.A meeting.

There were some who sought to infer that the AAP may be playing hardball in sharing Lok Sabha seats with the Congress in Delhi and Punjab.

STRIPPING CASE

B'gavi woman to get 2 acres, ₹5L as relief

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Belagavi

THE state government announced 2.03 acres of land and Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the woman who was stripped and tied to an electric pole by a group of people at New Vantamuri village near Belagavi recently. The victim suffered the humiliation on December 11 after her son eloped with a girl in the same village.

The government ordered the allotment of land under the Land Ownership Scheme through Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi said the corporation too approved the land without delay.

Meanwhile, the Belagavi police arrested three more accused on Saturday, taking the total number of arrests to 11. The arrested are Santosh Basappa Nayak, Shobha Rajappa Nayak and Lakkavva Yallappa Nayak, all residents of Vantamuri.

Belagavi Police Commissioner SN Siddramappa suspended Police Inspector of Kakati police station Vijaykumar Sinnur as the incident occurred in his jurisdiction. P5

Civic workers from Koraga community denied homes

PRAKASH SAMAGA @ Udupi

PEOPLE in Byndoor town of Udupi district seem not so kind to the tribal group, Koragas, as civic workers from the community are being denied homes on rent because of their caste.

Around 25 civic workers attached to the Byndoor Town Panchayat are finding it difficult to rent houses for the last two to three weeks. They were recently transferred from Udupi CMC to Byndoor and reported to work from December 1. Though some of them were able to rent a house in the town initially, they were evicted within two days after the landlord found out their caste.

One of the civic workers, Rakesh, said, "As we don't have houses here, we shuttle between Udupi and Byndoor spending Rs 100 for train fare every day. We have to start at 3 am from Udupi to report to work on time in Byndoor, which is 70 km away. We are upset that we are denied accommodation despite we keeping the town clean."

Laxman, zonal convener, Koraga Sanghatane, Byndoor, said it is a disgrace that Koraga people have been subjected to inhuman treatment. "The district administration should step in and provide them accommodation. There are PWD quarters in Byndoor and they can be renovated and given to these civic workers," he said.

Udupi Deputy Commissioner Dr Vidyakumari said she will verify the availability of PWD quarters and make sure that these civic workers will get a place to stay soon.

Tiger prowls, it's curfew in 3 villages near Mysuru

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

A tigress and its two cubs have strayed into farmlands in three villages near Mysuru, making life miserable for villagers for the last three weeks. The tiger family, which has been sighted by many villagers and also caught on camera traps, has been roaming in banana plantations, sugarcane fields and shrubs. The stray cats have brought life to a total standstill with a curfew-like situation in Chikka Kanya, Dodda Kanya and Bythahalli villages.

A tent set up by forest officials to monitor the tiger at Doddakanya village in Mysuru | UDAYA SHANKARS

Scared villagers have been staying indoors, while children are not venturing out to play near fields or on the outskirts of the villages. Farmers, who were expecting bumper crops, have not been able harvest their crops nor water their fields.

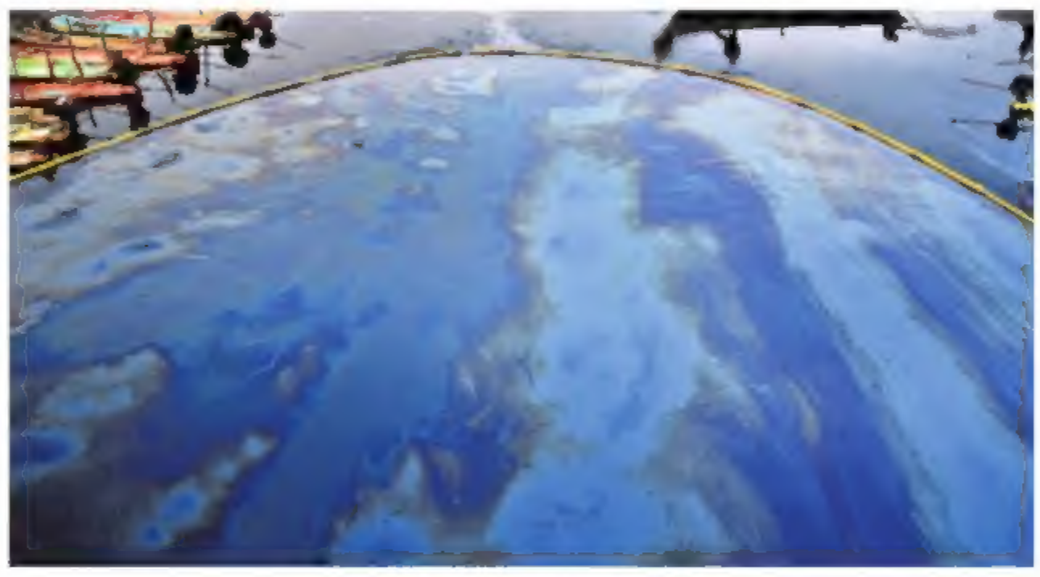
Those going out to work and attending to daily activities are doing so in groups and are moving around, preferably, in four-wheelers. Nobody goes out after sunset and the forest department's efforts to trap the wild cat have proved futile.

Basavanna, a farmer in Dodda Kanya, returns home with his cow by 3 pm, which is at least three hours earlier than normal as he is scared of a tiger attack. He is also worried that the tigress could take away his only milching cow that earns him livelihood.

This is the time horse gram and green gram are harvested, but fields have been left unattended as labourers are not willing to work. P5

WITH THIS ISSUE

PLUS 12 PAGES MAGAZINE



UNDER THREAT

A CPCL team working to stop the spread of oil slick at Ennore Creek in Chennai. The environmental hazard is now threatening 30 villages near the Pulicat lake | P RAVIKUMAR | P5

KSDL getting sandalwood oil from Oz

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE @ Bengaluru

FOR the last 107 years, Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) has enraptured the state with its sandalwood soaps. However, dwindling sandalwood tree cover in the country, apart from the need to serve diverse customers, has prompted KSDL - the maker of iconic 'Mysore Sandal' soap - to reimagine its strategy, with an investment of Rs 500 crore.

KSDL claims to be the only manufacturer globally to use natural sandalwood oil for soap production, justifying its premium price tag. But rampant illegal felling and smuggling of sandalwood trees in Karnataka has compelled the company to explore other geographies for a steady flow of the most important raw material – sandalwood oil.

The company is importing the oil from Australia. Last year, it imported 4,000 kg and will increase it to 7,000 kg this year.

Simultaneously, the government has started a plantation drive, signing MoUs with 700 farmers in Karnataka, translating to 4,000 acres of land to grow sandalwood. "Earlier, sandalwood, wherever it was grown, was state property. Now, the government has removed that clause, and facilitated farmers to grow trees in their own fields. They can sell the trees to the forest department or KSDL after a 20-year period (when the trees are mature enough to yield wood)," said MB Patil, Large and Medium Industries and Infra Development Minister. P9

3 picked up from TN in Yogeeshwara kin's murder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE murder of MLC CP Yogeeshwara's 62-year-old brother-in-law P Mahadevaiah is said to have been almost solved with the arrest of three suspects from Tamil Nadu. The mastermind, Murugesh (40), was earlier working in the fields of the MLC's brother in Channapatna and was known to Mahadevaiah.

Murugesh found out that Mahadevaiah had recently got Rs 7 crore after selling a property. Assuming that the money must be in the victim's farmhouse at Vaddaradoddi in Channapatna taluk, he along with his two associates killed Mahadevaiah to make away with the cash. But the victim had kept the money in the bank.

Murugesh was reportedly removed from the job three months ago, but he continued to stay in the locality, making a living by catching fish. He kept visiting Mahadevaiah at the farmhouse and supplying him fried fish, all the time hatching his plot. P5

HISTORIC WIN

Jemimah Rodrigues takes a selfie with the team after beating England | SPORTZPICS

India women spinning new tale in Test matches

KALYANI MANGALE @ Navi Mumbai

VICTORY in Test matches is always special, especially for the romantics. In the days dominated by shorter formants and instant results, the longer format gives a different kind of joy to the players in whites. And if you are India women playing home Test after a gap of nine years, the victory would not just be sweet but historic as well.

There are quite a few firsts too. There were three debutants and nine players donning the whites for the first time at home. Add Harmanpreet Kaur's debut as captain to lead the team to record 347-run win against England, it would definitely be recounted with pride in the years to come. The joyous celebration — one of the stars of the Test, Jemimah Rodrigues taking a selfie lying on the ground — said it all. After leading England by 478 runs on Day Two, where as many as 19 wickets fell, India set a huge total for England to chase. The vistors were never going to get close to it. What makes this win even more special is that this is India's third win at home with the first one coming in 1976 under the leadership of Shantha Rangaswamy. Second win was in 2014.

England, one of the two sides that regularly play Tests along with Australia, looked out of sorts in the longest format after winning the T20I series this month. India were at their dominant best, but bigger challenge awaits against Australia in Mumbai. P15